

What to Say and Words to Use

for Parents and Caregivers

When discussing sexuality with your child, think about what you want to say and the words you use. Your words matter. What you say can have an impact on how your child feels about their body, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. Below are some suggestions for you and your family to try.

Considerations...	 Say...	Instead of saying...
Recognize that all people are sexual beings and people of all ages may have questions.	Sexuality is important to talk about. It may take time for us to both feel comfortable, but let's try to get started.	We don't need to talk about sexuality yet. "You're too young" or "it doesn't apply to you".
Acknowledge that some people are girls, some are boys, some are both, and some are neither.	Girl, boy, transgender or non-binary people with disabilities; or gender-neutral terms like people or everyone.	Girl or boy (exclusively).
Acknowledge that children understand their gender identity and expression as early as 3 or 4 years of age.	Thank you for sharing this with me. Let's find out some more information about gender identity and how you want to show that to the world.	You can't know that you are transgender, you are still changing.
Understand that children should only hug people they feel comfortable with and where permission is given (on both sides).	Let's talk about how to tell when someone else wants to receive a hug so we respect their boundaries as well. I will also ask family members or friends to ask for your permission before hugging or touching you.	It's just a hug. Give your aunt a hug.
Accept that having relationships and friendships can help prepare children for later dating and is part of healthy social and emotional development.	How do you know if someone is a good friend? How do you show someone that you care about them?	Don't tell your friend that they upset you. They may not want to be your friend anymore.
Recognize that all children and teens are different. They will grow and develop at their own pace.	Good question, I'm glad you asked. This is new to me so let's find out together.	Your brother/sister didn't want to know this information at your age.
Understand that not talking about sexuality can cause shame and lead to risky behaviours.	This is new for all of us and can be a bit uncomfortable so let's learn together.	Our family doesn't talk about this.
Hear their concerns.	It sounds like you're having a tough time. Is there anything in particular you'd like to talk about?	You're fine. You have nothing to worry about. Just don't think about it.